

Cutting Corn.

By Peter McArthur.

It is many years since I cut corn before, and I don't care if it is many years before I cut corn again. It is slugging hard work from the first hill to the last. One doesn't even get a rest when tying the shocks, for the brittle stalks break until a fellow's temper is all frazzled. What's that you say? "It ought to be hauled straight from the field without shocking, and put in a silo!" Don't I know it! I've probably read more bulletins of the Department of Agriculture than you have, and, besides, I take two agricultural papers. I know what ought to be done with corn just as well as you do, so don't interrupt me, for I am sore from head to foot, and not in the best of humor. It is all right to talk about scientific methods, but there are times when one has to do things as best he can. I know there are machines for cutting corn, but one of them would cost more than the whole crop is worth, and there isn't one in the neighborhood that can be hired. When the time came for the corn to be cut, I just had to cut it as my fathers had to cut it before me, and perhaps the Indians cut it in the same way before them. You have to cut your corn according to your patch, just as surely as you cut your coat according to your cloth. But I am not going to defend myself. A man doesn't defend himself unless he knows he is in the wrong, and I am not in the wrong. All I wanted to say when I started was that cutting corn is hard work. It doesn't appeal to me even as a form of exercise, but what a man sows—plants—that he must reap; and having planted corn in the joyous spring-time, I had to cut it when the melancholy days had come, the saddest of the year. The one consolation about it is that it will yield chicken and cow feed for the whole winter.

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As a form of exercise, cutting corn combines most of the motions of wrestling, skipping the rope, and tossing the caber. You begin by getting a half-Nelson on a hill of corn, then you strike at it with a hoe, and the same skill is needed to keep from hitting your toes that is used in skipping. When you have trawled between your legs all the stalks you can sprawl along with, you take the unruly bundle in your arms and jam it against the shock. Then you take up the hoe and resume the original exercise. I think it would do very well as part of the training of a prize-fighter, though it might be too exhausting. I have no doubt that a hoe that has had its handle docked and its blade dished by a blacksmith is the best instrument to use, for most other cutting tools have been tried and rejected. I have seen everything used, from a carpenter's adze to a hay-knife, and none of them seemed to make the work easier. The Cuban machete, which is used for cutting sugar-cane in times of peace, and for carving the oppressors in time of war, always looked to me as if it would make a very plausible corn-cutter, but I never saw it tried. For some of the stalks I struck, I think a butcher's bone-saw would be best, though I suppose a strong man might cut them with a sharp axe. I am inclined to think it would be a good idea for a man who is cutting corn to have a caddy, the same as they have when playing golf. The boy could carry all kinds of cutting tools in a bag, and when you had sized up your hill of corn you could pick out the tool that seemed best in your judgment, and go at it. This is a sportsmanlike way of doing the work that should appeal to gentleman-farmers everywhere, but it would hardly do to let the hired man go at it that way. The artistic side of work is not supposed to appeal to him, and he usually has the brute strength, or should have it, to plod along with a hoe, and cut the amount he should in a day. As I forgot to ask someone how much corn an able-bodied man is supposed to cut in a day, I shall not be definite on this point for fear I should expose myself to unfeeling laughter. Suffice it to say that, somehow, during the last couple of weeks in September, I cut five acres of corn in what Bill Nye would call "a rambling, desultory way." Of course, I didn't work at it all the time. Not at all. I spent a lot of time letting the ache get out of my hands and doctoring the cracks in my fingers.

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Corn is said to furnish food to more people of the human race than any other crop. Whenever I think of this, I feel a broader sympathy for my fellow men. As part of a balanced diet, corn products may be all right, but I don't care to have them for a regular diet. Corn mush is good enough once in a while, but occasionally one gets a passable Johnny-cake

a rule, I prefer to feed the corn to pigs and cows, and then eat them. But perhaps corn, like a lot of other things, is not what it used to be. A few years ago, a correspondent of the New York Sun sent in a bunch of recipes for making Johnny-cake, hasty pudding, corn dodgers, and other renowned corn delicacies. The paper published the article, but the editor added a wailing note:

"Where can you get the meal, man, where can you get the meal?"

This led to a prolonged discussion, in which it was shown that it is not possible to get good corn meal any more. The prevailing opinion seemed to be that only meal made from the small, eight-rowed, yellow corn that one never sees any more, is fit for human food. Moreover, it must be ground with stones in an old-fashioned wind or water-power mill. From this it would seem that the materials for a Johnny-cake such as used to inspire poets to song is no longer procurable. That may account for the unpalatableness we are offered when we order corn dishes at even the best hotels or restaurants. The whole tendency in the development of corn has been to increase the yield and hog-fattening qualities of corn. Perhaps if someone undertook to develop corn for human food, as sweet corn has been developed for canning purposes, we might get decent Johnny-cakes again. Sweet corn for table use has certainly been brought to a high state of perfection, and, considering its digestibility, I am afraid it is perhaps too tempting. During the green-corn season I indulged in it so immoderately that one night I had the most up-to-date nightmare I have yet experienced. I thought I looked up into a wonderfully blue sky, and was surprised to see a tandem of box-kites such as are sometimes used to carry up advertising signs. Without stopping to reason how or why, I went up to have a closer view of what was going on, and found that a number of well-known Toronto editors were busy fastening an American flag to the lowest kite. As this happened during the first week of the campaign, I began to protest violently at their disloyalty, when the airship in which I suddenly discovered that I was travelling became unmanageable. I was so startled on making this discovery that I promptly fell out, and

"With the setting sun,

Dropped from the zenith like a falling star."

Luckily, I wakened before I struck the ground, and so escaped annihilation. Since then I have moderated my attacks on green corn. But perhaps the corn was not at fault. It may be that I was not suffering from physical indigestion, but from mental indigestion, from reading so many political editorials, as well as on corn. During the campaign, I heard a lot of people talk as if they were suffering from water-brash on the brain, through trying to assimilate too much pre-digested politics.

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In the days when coon-hunting was the sole relaxation of a vigorous race of young men who worked in the fields all day and tramped the woods all night, I used to hear much about roasted corn. As I was too young to go with them, I had to content myself with accounts of midnight feasts, when they would light a fire and roast ears of corn. My mouth used to water at the descriptions they gave of these banquets, and on several occasions I lit a fire in the woods and tried to do a little feasting myself, but I was never able to roast an ear of corn so that it tasted like anything except a half-burned stick. I would just as soon take a brand out of the fire and start to gnaw the coals. Possibly I never got the knack of it, but I think those accounts of feasting on roasted corn that had been stolen from some farmer's field at midnight in the dark of the moon, were somewhat overdrawn. But speaking of coon-hunting, I didn't see an ear in the whole field that showed where a coon had fed. Time was when half of the rows near the woods would be husked and eaten. Of course, squirrels used to help, but I didn't see one corn-fed black squirrel. Neither was there a red squirrel or chipmunk. But there were hundreds and hundreds of sparrows. I was surprised to find that these little wretches are able to eat corn on the cob, but the frayed ends of the husks and the bare cobs showed that they had been living high. Judging from the amount they had partly stripped, a flock of sparrows are about as expensive to support as a flock of hens. One day, when I was cutting, there was a sudden stir on the ground ahead of me, and I stopped in time to see a flock of quail that were standing looking at me. I stood and looked at them, but not for long. They suddenly rose with a whirr and flew to another field. I am told that they confine their eating to grass-seeds and weed seeds, but I have often seen where they had fed on corn when shocks had been left in the field in the winter time. Anyway, they are welcome, for quail are about as pretty and interesting as anything one can have on a farm, and they are valuable, too. I cannot exactly remember just now what each quail is said to be worth to the farmer, but it is either \$18.83 or \$19.11.

Canada's New Minister of Agriculture.

When R. L. Borden was called upon to form a Cabinet, there was much speculation amongst agriculturists as to who would be the new head of the department in which they are most interested. Andrew Broder, Dundas; W. F. McLean, South York; Wm. Smith, South Ontario; and Martin Burrell, of British Columbia, were among those whose qualifications seemed to warrant their appointment. The final choice rested upon Martin Burrell, the member for the Yale-Cariboo constituency of British Columbia. Mr. Burrell is an Englishman by birth, having been born in Faringdon, Berkshire, England, on October 15th, 1858. He received his education at St. John's College, Hurstpierpoint. He came to Canada at the age of twenty-seven, and engaged in horticultural work in the Niagara Peninsula, until 1899. In 1900 he left Ontario and went to British Columbia, where he received the appointment of Member of the Board of Horticulture in that Province. During the years of 1907 and 1908 he was in England, acting in the capacity of Fruit Commissioner and lecturer for the British Columbia Government. He contested Yale-Cariboo in the Conservative interest for the House of Commons in 1904, and was defeated, but at the general election of 1908 was elected by over 800 majority.

While Mr. Burrell has not had a very long Parliamentary training, he has had the benefit of a wide experience in horticultural work, both in Ontario and in British Columbia, and a good knowledge of horticulture implies a fair understanding of most of the other branches of agriculture. Those engaged in agriculture in Canada number about two-thirds of the country's population, and the vastness of rural enterprises and the great number of subdivisions into which the calling is divided, or, rather, divides itself, makes it necessary that the head of this department be a man well posted in all things pertaining to the best interests of the calling. He must be aggressive, as well as progressive, and must remember that when, through his department, he enacts regulations or transacts business which furthers agriculture, he is doing a good to a vast majority of his fellow countrymen and to the country as a whole. We believe that the possibilities of agriculture in this country are practically unlimited, and under the leadership of Mr. Burrell we shall hope for some urgently needed reorganization in this most important department.

"Rube's" Position Re-stated.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

Allow me to compliment some of your correspondents on the admirable manner in which they controverted statements which I never made. I am perfectly aware, for instance, that it is none of the hired man's business how the boss puts in his time. I was merely pointing out certain advantages he had which are apt to be overlooked. I prefer to work for short periods, as in that way I get 25 per cent. higher pay, and 50 per cent. more consideration and better treatment. I have nothing to say against any man I have worked for; with one or two exceptions, they were all honorable, considerate and intelligent men. But, to come down to plain facts, anybody who has studied the question will observe that thousands of men are being taken off the farm by the railroads and factories. In my humble opinion, the reasons are plain: (1) Fixed hours of work; (2) facilities for getting married and having their own homes; (3) no social relations or obligations between employer and employee, and their time being their own to do what they like with. Your mechanic doesn't expect to go to bed at 9 p. m., just because the boss does. (4) Higher wages; a section hand can bank more money than a hired man, if he wishes to. I merely endeavor to state facts; I don't comment on them. By all means, hired men, let us throw in our lot, heart and soul, with the farmer, and make his interests our own. It is easier far to "work hard" than to "put in time." Putting in time is the very hardest work in creation, whether it is done on a farm or in a penitentiary. But if the farmer wishes his man to work in the right spirit, he must manifest the right spirit himself, and not regard his employee as a kind of machine or animal out of which he wants to get as much as possible.

Oxford Co., Ont.

Principal Grange, of the Ontario Veterinary College, Toronto, at the opening exercises of the new term, made the pleasing announcement that a new site on University Avenue, at the corner of Anderson St., had been selected, and that plans for a new building are being prepared. The assembly hall was crowded with students, who listened to appropriate addresses from President R. A. Falconer, of Toronto University, Hon. Thos. Crawford and C. C. James, Deputy Minister of Agriculture.